

INTERVIEW WITH C.C. SWINK

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SWINK

The date is October 28. I am talking with Mr. C. C. Swink here at 1001 Balls Hill Road, and the first question we have is about your parents.

Well, my father was born up above what they call Great Falls now. At that time it was Forestville. And my mother was born at what is known now as the Commons.

Oh really, by Westgate there?

Yeh. That was Jonathan Magarity's farm, all that land all around in through there. And then one of the sisters married a Storm, and it was known after that as the Storm's farm, a big dairy farm.

What was your mother's maiden name?

Karen.

Karen?

Yeh, Karen Magarity was her name. She was a Magarity. One of Jonathan Magarity's.

One of his daughters. You mentioned Forestville up by Great Falls. Well, was that the town of Great Falls? Well I guess it's not really a town.

No, it's about like Langley down here. It used to be a post office and a store.

And if you blink you miss it. But, so Forestville was just a little settlement out on the Pike there? Well, you mentioned the school that you attended. What was the name of it again?

Carper School.

That came up in the Rambler articles. They mentioned Carper

School up above Scotts Run.

"It was about three miles from the old mill down there.

And remember I asked you what kind of things did you study there.

Do you remember any particular subjects?

Well, subjects then was mostly readin', writin', and 'rithmetic was the main ones and some grammar and English.

Do you remember the names of any of your teachers?

Yeh, Grace Mack was one of them.

Smack?

No, Mack. You remember Hunter Mack that just died here the other week?

The name is familiar.

It was his sister. You know where the police station is over there, well they owned that farm over there.

Oh they did. Who lived in that house, you know, on the other side of Balls Hill Road from the police station? That beautiful house up by the trees. Was that the Mack house?

The old frame house, that was it.

Is that where the Macks lived?

Yeh. That was my mother's place to start with, and they traded. See, he had this favorite sister and brother, Mrs. Mack and my mother, and he was to get this mill down here. And so he didn't want the mill, he wanted the farm. So they traded. Margarity was his name, but they changed it after he married, Allen--no, his name was Allen Mack--and they traded. So my father took the mill property and he took the farm right opposite the police station, and it runs all the way down and joins where you drive in there in front of Ernest Webb's, you know.

And the other brother had the back end of it next to Scotts Run, down there, you know that big old house that sits back on the bank.

Where is this now?

Going out to Lewinsville Road. Going towards the Beltway.

Right.

He built a church on the back end of it now.

By Scotts Run?

Yeh. Have you ever noticed that church?

Yes. I think I know where it is. What was the name of your father?

What was his first name?

Ed.

Ed Swink? Was that E. F.?

E. F. For Edwin Franklin.

Well, the Rambler was talking about walking down Georgetown Pike, and you know, The Evening Star, and he looked at the mill and, of course the mill was abandoned at that time, and at the post box was E. F. Swink marked on the box.

Here's a picture of it, right here. See it, next to the house where Betty Cooke lives now?

Yeh, right there. Now was this the mill right here, over to the right?

Yeh, that's the mill. These are cinderblocks and a road. The road goes between this pile of blocks. See, it's a stream that runs right down here. And that board across there was the walk across to the cow barn.

And that's the stream that you have to cross over to get down to the parking lot?

Yeh.

Right. And there was a cinderblock wall right there?

No, they were made to sell.

Oh, he just would make them to sell to people. How would he make them?

He had a little machine, made it by hand. Used cement, gravel, and sand; mix it together.

Take the gravel out of Scotts Run?

Yeh, that's right. It had plates the size of 8 x 16 plates were. He had them made in the foundry. And he set one of those in the bottom of this machine. And he filled that up, and he had like a pestle, and he mixed the cement till it was just about wet enough to stick together. You can't get it too wet because it would stick to the plates. See, they were kind of rough looking on the fronts of them, and they had stakes on the side of them, you see.

Yeh, sort of pointed out.

No, that was down. When he got it level up to where the holes come in, well you pull this lever across and these two plungers that went across there made the holes. Then you turned the pestle over and you had an end on it like rounded off. And you would pack it down on each side like that and fill it up and flatten it off at the top. And then you would raise those handles up and hope that it didn't fall apart. And the two ends on it...

Did it ever fall apart for him?

Oh yeh. The two ends would let down and the face would come back. See, that would hinge on the three sides, and the two ends and this face side and the back side would let down where the holes come across. And then you could reach down and pick it up and it would weigh about 50 pounds with the stone and gravel and sand and cement.

How much would he charge a load for them?

Oh, he sold them by the piece, about 15 cents a piece. We'd make about 100 a day.

A hundred a day?

We'd take that plate up and with that on it and carry it out, and we had boards to lay it on. And you would set that down on it, the board, and next morning you would go and get them off the plate. The next day, pile them up in a pile, and then do your plates over again. How there's a procedure you had to do, and then go in the branch and wheel out some sand and gravel and separate it, you know, sift the sand so you would have enough to mix it up.

But you would get the sand out of the stream too?

Yeh, from the banks. Most of it would be where it had washed up on the sides.

Just the silt and stuff. You wouldn't buy if commercially like we would go out to buy sand?

No.

What other kinds of things did your father make at the mill after the mill went out of business?

Well, he had a sawmill over, you know, where the parking lot is now. Well that's where the sawmill was, over next to the branch, right alongside the branch.

On the other side of Georgetown Pike?

Yeh. See, this branch went down and they got the gate here now. And over in here where Scotts Run, where this little branch comes together, is where the sawmill was. It straddled over top of this branch, the big saw did because the sawdust went down in the stream, this little stream

that went down here.

In the stream?

Yeh, in this little stream that comes down here.

I didn't know that. Is there anything left down there like a foundation or anything?

No. That big old traction steam engine sits back down there.

Yeh. How did that work? What, did they have the power of the water would run it, and steam?

Yeh, steam. It was--it got water from the branch. They got a big barrel there, and the kide had to carry the water up the bank and keep that barrel full from to get steam.

Must have been a lot of work.

Yeh. He had a mill built over it. It was just a one-story job, the mill was, and back of the mill, had it where he could hook a belt through that way and saw woodstove wood lengths and stuff like that, cord wood. Then over on the side he made a like a jigsaw frame there.

Jigsaw? You mean one of those big blades?

No, this went up and down more like a disk. Like, you've seen a bucksaw blade?

Bucksaw? I don't know what you mean.

Like this one, with a blade like that.

Oh, yeh. Two-hand type thing.

No, this is a one-hand thing. Any way, the blade is about that long.

About three feet, three or four feet?

Yeh, and he had these big timbers, one on either side, and they made a frame. And put that blade in it, and they had a setup where it would go over with an eccentric on it so that it would go up and down.

What, the belt?

No, the saw itself.

Oh, the saw.

The sawblade would go up and down just like that. Then he had this table there and he used to make cartshafts.

What was that?

Cartshafts, like a buggy shaft that they put a horse in to hook it up. Yeh, this was for carts, for dump carts for hauling dirt and rocks and anything else in it, see.

Um-hm.

They would---then they had to be on a kind of a curve, so they took out the timbers, about this thick made of white oak.

Two or three inches?

Yeh. He had a pattern he would lay down on that piece of timber and mark around it with heavy crayon. And get back there, you know, and sight that right on through that saw, and us kids would have a piece of belt about that long and about some wide, you know, and we would have to get down every now and then and flop the sawdust, 'cause it would get on the top of his marks and he couldn't see where he was drawing. That was our job, to keep that water filled up back there.

Keep that sawdust off?

Keep that sawdust off where he was sawing out the cartshafts.

And that would all fall down into the branch?

No; that wouldn't back there because it was farther back - there was not much sawdust to that, but where he was sawing the big logs was quite a lot to that. And then, they had to fix a carrier for a long time so's it would carry it up and pile it out there on the bank

where the driveway is, and it goes in there now.

Well, would he make the carts and things right there?

No, no. Would sell them to the people in Washington--wagon shafts, cart shafts, wagon tongues, axles.

Axles? Wooden axles?

Yeh, made out of wood, and then they had a piece of metal that they could put on the end of the wheels.

Yeh, to support them.

Yeh. What he would do is to make the axle about four or five or six inches in size and whatever length it was, and so forth, hickory and white oak.

Where would they get the wood to do the carts?

Well, a lot of it he got from back in there from Mackall's, off on the Ball property, you know, between that and the river. And then some of the last ones I think he cut the big white oaks up in there as you go to Spring Hill and up Old Dominion Drive on the left-hand side--there where the branch goes under just before you get to Spring Hill--well that belongs to Elgin. There's some beautiful white oaks in there.

Oh, right on Old Dominion, right before you get to the 7-11 and stuff at Spring Hill?

Yeh, on Spring Hill it's on the left-hand side there.

That vale sort of very....by the woods that's in there now.

Right! Woods in there now. Got a lot of the white oaks mainly and hickory type.

Well, do you remember anybody in any of the companies in Washington that would make the carts for him that he would sell to?

* He would...they would, like Adler's was one that was more like a hardware store or farm and equipment and stuff like that, see? And there was another place over on 7th Street - I think Mayfield and Brown - and they would buy the wagon tongues in the rough, and what I mean that they would have to.....

Finish them up?

Yeh, finish them up and the axles and stuff like that.

How would he get them into Washington?

Horse and wagon.

Horse and wagon? He must have taken it, I guess, over Chain Bridge.

When I was 13 years old, I carried a load of oak when they was building Union Station.

Oh, really?

Yeh. Those...you would cut them in an X shape about eight or nine inches in diameter, you know where these booms sort of raised, they had these upright little old dinky engines over there with a drum on them, you know, and a cable. I thought that was the derndest thing. You know, I would sit there and watch them after I had unloaded my load of booms, and they would have sold them these to make the cranes out of, you know, to hook 'em up to raise those rocks up.

The cranes? What do you mean?

Like you see these big cranes now that pick up stuff and move it around, you know.

Oh, when they were excavating to build the Union Station?

No, they were building it and that's big rocks on the sides, you know, on the stones where it's built mostly out of stone.

But they had to move on?

Yeh. But they had to have a crane to move them with. Yeh, and that's what they had what you call 'em, little old dinky engines. And they were all upright engines and steam burning coal in them.

When was Union Station built? When was it, about 1913?

I was about 13 years old, and I was born '95.

'95. So it would be 1913 I guess. Something like that.

No, it wasn't that long. It was more like 1908.

Yeh, I was adding ten to 1900 instead of five. 1908. Because I have seen pictures of it in, you know, tourist guides to Washington type thing in the newly-opened Union Station. Well, what, going into Washington, what kind of, I asked this question to you before, what kind of shape was Georgetown Pike in? It's infamous as the worst road.

Well, it was in foul shape, I'll tell you, until this fellow Lighter bought that place back in there on the river where CIA is now. And from Langley on down from his entrance where it went in the, why he had it surfaced all the way up from Chain Bridge, up to his driveway, and then on back into the river. And the rest of it wasn't too bad. But Canal Road down there was made of flint about the size of your fist, bedded down in that road. And, by golly, it was rough; it was solid, you know what I mean, you didn't go through and get in mud or anything.

Yeh. Well, you were saying about Georgetown Pike; what was it built with, rocks?

Well more or less with rocks. Most of 'em most places rocks were setting up on the side. That was years ago, when they found the parts that it was originally.

Yeh. A lot of it when they resurfaced it they graded it off, you know, and put this blacktop on it.

Well when, do you remember the '36 flood? When, I guess, Chain Bridge was flooded out, wasn't it? I'm not sure.

Well, I come across there the last trip. Across there the water was splashing up on the bridge. I was coming home from work. But that bridge was different from what it is now.

Yeh, it was lower, wasn't it? A lot lower?

Yeh. They put a little arch like in it. The water was hitting those abutments like, and just splashing up on the bridge.

Yeh, and just right over it. That must have really been something. But I think they said that this last one we just had was worse than the '36. It was awfully bad. Um, well when were the tolls put into effect along Georgetown Pike? Was that, have they always been?

No, they, I don't know when it was they had this idea they was going to resurface it, you know, put crushed rock on it and what have you. Started this toll business, there was one toll gate right down here below before you get to Swinks Mill on the right-hand side there.

Going down the hill there?

No, it's on the level part right after you go down this first grade here to where the gate is that goes back into the park.

Right, yeh.

Well, it's, I suppose as far from here as out to the mailbox or some below that. They had the toll gate there.

And then one down at Langley?

Yeh, and one up over at Great Falls somewhere.

Do you remember how much it cost?

I think it was about 25 cents round trip.

• 25 cents? A lot less than tolls are today. And you said you bought stock in that company. I forget, I was trying to think of the name of the Washington and Georgetown Turnpike Company or something like that. Well, what kind of...you mentioned Georgetown Pike had rocks and everything. What kind of condition was, like Swinks Mill Road? And what about those other roads?

Well, it, Swinks Mill Road, was nothing but a dirt road. By golly, sometimes you could back up in there going up that hill that the Masons were, that nephew went around that real short curve in the road that's nothing but a day like today, you would have to go down into water about this deep in water, you know.

Just solid mud. Was Route 7 any better?

Route 7 was, yeh, it was better. We used to go up to the brick mill and haul sticks and wheat and...

Went up to Colvin Run?

Yeh. It was all there.

Oh, had you been there when the Millards...

Yeh, take wheat up there in the fall of the year. And then dried up the flour, take some corn for corn meal and stuff like that, that's after Dad quit the grinding down there. He couldn't grind the flour after this mill here broke down.

What happened when...do you remember when it broke down?

I just can remember of seeing this old man that he had there that run the mill, Old Man Harnesby, had a stiff arm like, I remember him. And I saw him up with the chute where it come down from up in the birds' nests on the floor up in here. And I've seen that; I just do remember, I must

have been a little bitty tot, you know. See that meal come out of that chute and the wheel, you see, was around on this side, only it doesn't show it in the picture, and the big old wheel was there.

Do you remember that wheel? Did you ever see that, or was it taken down?

Oh yeh, many times. Climbed over it many times.

You did, oh. How big was it?

Well, at that time when I was little, I guess it seemed like it was a whole lot bigger than what it actually was. But I imagine those spokes in there was about eight or ten feet long, maybe about 20 feet, 18 or 20 feet in diameter.

The Rambler called it enormous. He said it was just, of course he was a city man, but he said it was enormous. What were you saying now, how did it break down? You were saying something about the shaft.

Well, you see, the wheel was out here and the water would come in from over here, the other side of this barn in this wooden cobay, and then went over top of the wheel and would run that mill, and the big axle was down in here. See, they had a big pit dug down there for the bottom part of the wheel to run in down there, let the water run on out on Scotts Run. And back up under here where the gears and one thing and another was, was where it broke, the big old wooden axle; see, all those things must have been about that big around in the axle, then those spokes was let in it and all of them were drilled out the holes, you know. And all of them were sitting on the same angle, corners were tapered off about two inches thick and about eight or ten inches wide. The spokes went up on either side, and then you had these buckets on top to hold the water, and it was made in a certain angle to catch the water and dump it at the

right time, you know. And when it wouldn't start, they would try to turn the water on and maybe it wouldn't start, and they would go out on this back end and stand on those buckets, you know, step on it and get the thing to going, then she would take off.

Yeh. Well, when was it built? That must have been quite a thing. Did your father originally build it?

No, he...that's what he got traded this piece of property right here for the mill down there.

It must have been quite an expense, you know, to keep, I mean get it engineered just right.

Yeh. It had a wooden like oak shingles on it. I remember them just plain. You could go up there and look out through the cracks in them and you could look right up through them and on a day like today, raining hard, you wouldn't feel a drop come through. I'll never know.

They had it just worked out right, I guess.

Yeh, they did. It was those oak shingles that was right there, I don't think it was, well I imagine they cut them in the woods and split them up and worked them down.

And just got it so the water would run right off.

Yeh, right steep. Couldn't see from the shape of it there.

What was on the second floor?

Well, this room right here was a room built in there, and this old man that run the mill slept right there. Old Man Harnesby.

Harnesby?

Yeh. And this is where back over on this side was where the burrs were.

The what?

The stone burrs.

Oh, the stones that actually ground the stuff up, the grain up.
You mentioned the, what was the word you used, foubay?

Foubay. Yeh, it went right across behind this barn here. It was, I suppose far as from here to the door over there away from it on that side across here, and then it curved around and come in and hid behind the mill.

It was on this side of Scotts Run?

Yeh, it had to be. Scotts Run was right over in there somewhere.

Yeh, on this steep cliff that comes right up there.

It formed--see the reace come down from the dam comes right in here, and right above that was where that building is there now that the Cooke's got a studio or something in there. Right opposite that there was what they call waste, when they shut the water off at the gate here, they would, what I mean, any run down it went out there.

Oh, sort of an outlet there.

Yeh, and went on down across right where that house is, you know.

Well where was the dam? Did they have a big pond up there?

Well, when you go out to Swinks Mill Road, you know, have you been up there lately?

Yes.

Well you know, they have got some little bridge built across there, cement. Well, it's a little bit above that. There's another branch that comes down across it and you have to cross over it there, the stream. I don't know whether it is some bridge there or what it is now, a culvert or bridge or something. Any way, that emptied right above the dam. The dam was built right at that, so that the branch, if you ever go up there you will notice that it comes down and goes under the Swinks Mill Road. The dam was right below it, so that the branch emptied in above the dam.

Right where that, I don't know, I guess it was some private person had a house built in there.

Yeh. Somebody built a big concrete type bridge or something. Well, the dam was right back up in there, just above that.

Well, some of the people that lived up on Swinks Mill there, I wonder if you knew anything about them. The Masons, did you know that family up on Swinks Mill? Something about they were carriage builders in Georgetown.

He was a blacksmith.

Oh, was he?

Yeh, Jess Mason.

Jess Mason? Well was he...did he have a shop in Washington?

Yeh. He had a shop down on Grace Street, I believe it was down, any way, it was down below M Street between that and the Canal in Georgetown.

Did you know the Larmans?

Yeh. Well she was a Larman, Mrs. Mason.

Oh, I see.

And they lived farther on the left, and the Masons lived up on that... you can hardly see the house now, for the trees and bushes.

Up in the...

Between the bushes up on that hill. And the Larmans was farther on up the road on the left-hand side. Nice lookin' house in there now. The old Larman house been torn down.

Torn down? Are there any Larmans or Masons around today?

The Masons didn't have any children, and the Larmans had a boy and a girl; but I think they both died of TB, but I'm not sure.

Oh, I see. He, the Rambler, had a long talk with him as he, when he hiked, I guess it was 1917, 1915, some place in around there, when he hiked on down. And I guess he talked to your father, E. F. Swink. And he mentioned the Payne family. Do you know anything about that?

No.

I don't know if it might have gotten off on the one part, well the other thing was, did you know of another mill off further up from Swinks Mill, Balls Mill?

Yeh. It wasn't no mill. The only thing was there was a hole in the ground like and some old mill stones been thrown down in the marsh like that.

Oh, is that it?

Years and years ago there was a mill there.

Yes. How far up was it, do you remember?

Well, you know where the bridge is now, that you go across from after you leave Cookes?

Right.

Well, it was right in that curve in there, right--there's a house built almost in the branch there, it's right across the creek from that.

Yeh, real close to the stream. Well are there any stones or anything left from that?

I doubt it. I think...

Probably all grown over.

Yeh. But I think Waltman, Howard Waltman, got one of them out of there. But they wasn't very big.

Yeh, just small type. Do you remember--do you know anything about when it was built or anything? That must have been years and years ago.

No.

You say when you were back in, you know, early 1900's it was all torn apart. There wasn't anything left there?

No, not a thing left there, only the shape of the ground looked like it had been something there. And it was marshy like, those kids I know seen those stones, but it was growed up with bushes. But the same mill race come down from up, must have been the dam, must have been built for that, I don't know, it was...

And then when they built the Swinks Mill...

They used the same dam, only they built the race around a little higher up on the bank. It went around it.

I wonder how the mill, your father's mill, first got started. It would be an interesting thing to find out. I don't know where you would go to look. But as far as your hill here, I have, you know, seen it such a view out, I have seen it called Prospect Hill and Balls Hill and...

Well, Prospect Hill I always heard was up at where Madiera School is.

By Green, what is it called, Greenway or Greenfield?

Yeh, something like that.

Yeh. I've seen sort of contrasting...

That's what always went as Prospect Hill with me. Then I have heard this called Prospect Hill, but it's always Balls Hill to me.

Now when Dr. Mottrom Ball, did he first build the house here?

I don't know.

You know, is this house built on a foundation of another house?

I think it was.

Yeh, one of the Ball's?

Yeh. I think it originally belonged to the Balls.

I think I read somewhere it was Mottrom Ball, and then I think it was a W. S. Ball.

Stuart.

Did you ever know any of them or?

Yeh.

How long did they---are any of them still living around here?

No. There was one of the nephews or something was over in Maryland, was here about a year ago. He's, I think, some of his people are buried over there at Lewinsville, and they come over to put flowers on the grave or something. And he stopped by, I forget what his name was, first name was, it was over in Maryland there, somewhere towards Baltimore.

Did you know any of the Reids over by the CIA? You know, there's a big graveyard over there dating back to 1910 or so. Maybe before you knew about them.

No, they...I don't. I'm trying to think of the first name. Yeh, there's Reids down there. They--one of them owned a big farm back in there towards the river, and the brother owned one right at Langley down here.

Yeh. Any of them---are they still around? I was down there by the CIA, and I don't know, I just hate to see...

Well, do you know Horace Gant?

Yeh, Floyd.

Floyd or Horace C. Well, I believe they could tell you more about that because see, they lived in just below them and right across from Floyd Gant's, a girl, one of the girls, what the devil was her name, she lived in on that road that cuts in there right by that gas station.

Yeh, I know where you mean, by Langley.

Ethel Reid was her name.

I don't know, I just hate to see--it was a pretty old stones back there, dating back to 1865 all knocked up and beaten up. And I hate to see, you know, I wish somebody from the family or something would sort of take, you know, fix the thing up a little bit and that kind of thing. You know, I hate to see it go to waste. Well, I have seen a lot of Civil War maps, they have this fort built up on your hill. Was there much to that?

That I can remember that it was just this trench running from out there to the Pike and then on around the side here and wound up right in back of the house.

Yeh. And it must have been a great defense to be able to look all the way out there, and it's quite a protection. But did you pick up any kind of artifacts or anything like that?

We found some bullets when we plowed the ground. And then when they went through here and cut that Beltway through, oh Christ, they were running in all directions, the bullets and pieces of glass, buttons, Army buttons.

You found that, some of that stuff?

Well, I didn't. I didn't go out there to look for it.

But other people were?

Yeh, we found--somebody did here, was a shell, two in fact. That was one of them had never exploded. About that big around and about so long. And then there was about half of one, about 2/3 of one, had one end was busted off. I give Old Man Evans the other one; it laid around here, and I didn't like the looks of it.

What? Bayard Evans over there--Evans Farm Inn?

Yeh. We used it for a doorstep.

The one that never exploded?

Yeh.

Oh really? I thought the best thing to do was to get rid of it.

And the old man wanted it.

Where did you find that?

I don't know. I think my wife's brother had plowed it up out here in the field somewhere when he was plowing.

Um. I'd be kind of scared, be a little nervous. But when they built the Beltway, did they completely cover up anything that would be left there from before?

Yeh.

With fill dirt and everything?

They dug it all to down there where that Beltway went and, you know, and they go up that grade there to get to the old Pike.

Yeh. And it's all been just about taken out.

Um-huh.

Yeh, but I'd like to be able to look around and see if I could get anything, but I guess it would all be picked up.

Yeh. They've been through with Geiger counters and everything else.

Oh, have they?

Yeh. This out here in this field, I guess some of that place out there is 30 feet deep with the fill dirt.

Fill dirt?

Yeh. They had dirt they were going to get rid of.

From the Beltway?

Yeh. It was right out here on the other side of your car--was a big barn, a dairy barn.

Dairy?

Yeh, and I let them tear that down and fill it in all the way back down there.

Oh, down by Cooper School there.

Yeh. That--it started up here and they filled all the way from up about where that pear tree is down to Cooper. See, well when you started up there you went down this bank and barn here; you see, you would go in it off from the driveway here on the top part and the bottom part you would come in, you would have to come up to get even ahead of rocks and stuff, and built a path there for the cows and horses to come up on this walk like. And then to get in the basement part of the barn, there was that much fall there.

Yeh, right. You owned all that property back in there?

That was--belonged to my wife. That 50 acres what was...100 acres was in there in a piece, and her brother got the other piece, and they probably cut the other side up where those houses are.

What was the family name?

Trammel.

Trammel? Oh yeh, right. Because I can remember to Churchill Road Elementary, and I can just vaguely remember looking out the window and seeing cows grazing all out there. So that was the Trammel farm, dairy farm? And I guess it was early '60's when all that housing development went up in there, and they built all that. But how much did, I guess, they have to take a lot of your property?

Took 14 acres.

Fourteen acres out of it? And remember I asked you about the original location of Balls Hill Road?

Where that ramp is there now, you get on the Beltway.

It was just a gentle grade up to there up to the Ball's Hill Road, up to Georgetown Pike. Like I said before, I wouldn't even think of the whole area without the, you know, Tysons Corner and the whole Beltway thing. Do you remember this old house up on the hill overlooking Dead Run, Sharon I think was the name of it? Do you remember that?

Yeh. That was Carpers owned it last.

Yeh.

The Dodge's place, it fills out about 200 acres there.

Two-hundred acres?

Yeh. It was a dairy farm.

And the Carper family owned it last. Do you remember what that building looked like at all? Do you recall it, the house?

Well, it was, part of it was stone and part of it was frame, I think. The original part probably was stone. And then it was built on, added on, to the frame.

It's supposed to be very old. The Fairfax history, they always talk about Sharon because it's some naval hero or admiral or something originally lived there. And do you remember when it was taken down?

Hasn't been too many years ago.

What happened to it?

They tore it down when they built all those houses in there.

Yeh.

See, they sold to Broyhill, it was, I think, the property over there, and they just come in there with bulldozers and tore down everything.

Yeh. So it was taken down for the houses. I thought it might have burned or something.

No, no. They just bulldozed everything down; the barns, silos, and everything else.

I can see, you can still see the two trees. That's all that's left.

Yeh. The spruce like, or something or other.

Yeh. And it's the little, you know, box sitting by these two enormous trees, sort of out of place almost. I just wanted to see if you had heard any of these. Do you remember the Jackson House or Jackson Home, remember where that one was?

That's at the top of the hill, going up towards Great Falls.

Yeh. Well, was that the family name, Jackson?

As far as I know or can remember. Yes. But I think that was in the Jackson family for years. One time I think it was a stone house there, I think it is a frame house there now. But I know there's an old foundation and part of a wall that was outside the driveway there, where the barn was.

Yeh. Do you remember the Boston family? Do you remember them?

Yes, oh, yes.

Did they live in that house right above Swinks Mill or...

Um-huh, yeh. A colored family, there's still a lot of them.

Bernie Boston, I know. The Star photographer still lives in that area. Do you remember--I know you know Mr. Wheat, don't you?

Oh yes.

Did you go into Washington with him at times? You mentioned something about you would go together into Washington to the markets to sell your produce. Do you remember?

Not necessarily so.

No. What kind of crops did you raise out here? Did you mainly--

were you mainly involved in the farming field?

No, I went in the Army and came back, got married, moved here, and I didn't do any farming. I was a cabinet maker.

Oh, were you?

And I worked in Washington. And from that time my wife got sick and I quit.

Where did you work in Washington?

I worked for Collier, job mostly, and remodeled a lot of those old houses in Georgetown. Worked for...

Furniture making, furniture?

Whatnot. Well that mantelpiece in that fireplace come out of the Lincoln house.

Lincoln house?

Robert.

Where, in Georgetown?

Yeh, in Georgetown, there on N Street. They--Mrs. Eisen, the daughter I was working for. We did work for the son, Robert Lincoln, Abraham's son.

Oh, really? Then there was Tad, I guess it was. Is that the other son?

This was Robert.

This came out of his house in Georgetown?

Yeh, um-huh. Was out of the music room and the marble too. Mrs. Eisen, that was the daughter; she didn't like it, and she wanted me to make her one antique couch. And, by golly, I made that and she gave me the one out of her room upstairs, and I didn't want it. This was all I wanted. I piled the marble up outside the house; and before I could get the marble home, Old Man Hillard, tilesetter, he had gathered up the

other one, it was white marble you know, and on the one back, pink streaks in it, and she was going to make him bring it back. I told him "no"; they let him have it. Of course, he sold it to somebody, you know.

Yeh.

Tilesetter. So she gave me the mantelpiece and the marble. Had to cut the marble down some because it didn't fit...in the mantel. I cut two inches off the shelf in the back. I didn't like all that hanging over there. And the fireplace used to be right over there where that pilaster is, just a little ridge right there.

Yeh, the ridge.

Yeh, down in the basement the big fireplace was right in the center of the chimney and the one upstairs was in the center up here, and this one that was in this room was over on the left side, about as big as that television set. And just the red bricks that little old mantelpiece on it was made somewhere in a blacksmith's shop. So I tore it out and moved the fireplace over and put flue lining all the way through to the top of the chimney.

Well, did you build the--was there originally a house here and then you added on to it?

No.

Or did you build it right up from...

No. I didn't build anything to it; I just been adding to it for years, put all hardwood floors in it all over, had those boards about so wide, you know, looked kind of rough and full of dust.

When did you originally move in here?

Oh, about 52 years ago, somewhere like that.

And what, did you buy it from somebody else or...

No, it belonged to my wife.

Oh, I see. Yeh, the Trammels.

Yeh, the Trammels. The roof had a wood shingle on it. Was set something like this. So I cut the roof down four feet in the center, and you still couldn't stand up on it, it's that steep. And you can imagine about what it was. It was over 45°, so that's the first thing. And I put electricity in it, and I put hot water heat. There was 13 of us went together, and paid for this line through from Lewinsville Electric Line through here to the old Pike.

Yeh. Do you remember some of those people who were involved in that?

Well, it was Carpers, Trammels, Cockrells, Dr. Jones, that was over where Horatius lives now, and the Macka. We all pitched in and paid, I think it was \$125 a piece.

Did you go out and do it yourselves?

No, no. We paid the electric people.

Oh, I see.

We furnished so much money, and they put it in. And as other people hooked on, we'd get our money back.

Oh, I see.

But nobody ever hooked on yet.

You never got your money back?

No.

Hm. No one ever hooked on; they just put out other lines?

Yeh, they hooked on, sure they did, but nobody would fight it to get their money back.

Oh, I see. They never did get the \$125 back.

No.

When did that electric service come in? In the '20's or...

Yeh, it must have been the early '20's.

When did you first get the telephone?

We got both at the same time.

Oh, both same time.

And that's Jones, Dr. Jones, was over there. They got all they wanted, was the telephone.

For the doctor?

Yeh, by golly. They didn't want to pay the money because they didn't want the electric lights. They wanted the telephone.

But they didn't get away with that, did they?

No.

Were you talking about some other additions to the house here? What were some other things you did?

I put on the outside. I went around it, I sealed round it, you see. It didn't have any subsiding on it. All it was was this clap-board like the outside on this end. All the rest of it I put Homasote Board on it from top to bottom. Pull the trim offen all the windows, put that Homasote Board on it, then put this feathered-edge Cypress siding on it.

Cypress siding? What was that, a special...?

Yeh, siding. One board lapped over another.

Right.

Regular siding.

Did you put the lightning rods up there?

No, they were on the old roof.

On the original?

Original, yes.

Kind of interesting design on that, you know. I think they put--

I haven't seen lightning rods with many new houses; I guess up on this hill you need them.

Indeed you do! Man, when we have a storm, we have it. Jumps off them light fixtures.

Does it happen--do you get those lightning come down?

Snap, crackles, carries on here. I think it struck about every tree around here.

Hm. Well, when did you get your first car? Did you remember when your first...

Oh, that was a Regal, second hand.

Regal?

Regal.

I never heard of that one.

There's a whole lot of them you never heard of; that's one of them. And that must have been about 1915 or 16.

Did you have to crank it or...

Yeh. And went in the Army and let my younger brother have it. I don't know what the devil he ever did with it, but it would run all right when it wanted to. Second hand. I never drove a car before in my life. I went down on 7th Street, I reached 14th Street, found this thing, it was an old touring car, looked good you know. I got in the car and went up 16th Street hill and, man, that thing chugged right along. Got up top of the hill, guy turned around, says "move over." I says, "I don't drive never." And he says, "move over here," and showed me what was low and high and take off the brake and the clutch, took off down to the District Building. I drove on down there, and we got out and went up in the office. Man fill out an application, give him a dollar, got my driver's permit.

A dollar?

Yeh.

It's \$8 now.

And that's all the instructions I ever had was driving from up 16th Street down to the District Building.

Been driving ever since then.

Yeh. Come on home. This road was so muddy then that the old Pike, I come out Churchill Road and out in there from that hollow down in there, and them ruts was about that deep. I thought I never would get through them. Had a pair of chains in the back, but didn't put them on.

Was it called Churchill Road then?

Yeh, I guess it was.

Off Chain Bridge then to Churchill?

Um-huh.

It was about 1916 you got your first car.

Must have been about that time. Then I had a Model T Ford. After that Model A Fords, Hupp. I got a Model T Ford, paid \$300--that was new. I bought it for my new Hupp; this new Hupp. 1924, \$1785. And I bought a Ford coupe, a little old thing with side curtains on it, you know, \$365. Both of 'em new and Ford outwore the Hupp.

\$365?

Yeh. For the Ford, but it outwore the \$1700 one. But it wasn't too long before the \$1700 one had a starter on it and the flywheel gear got stripped, you know, until finally I had to crank it, and it made up its mind to start, it didn't, if it didn't, why it didn't. Was all it would do.

Did you ever take any of the electric cars in Washington and ever ride any of the streetcars in Georgetown on M Street? You can still see the tracks down there.

Yeh. That was before they got automobiles. The Old Dominion was riding. You get on, go down past Rosslyn, I mean Georgetown, go on down 7th Street or wherever you wanted to go.

How long would it take you to get into Washington?

Well it just depends. By golly, sometimes it would take you 25 minutes, something like that, 20, 25 minutes. Sometimes when it was crowded coming back, it would take you longer 'cos it would stop longer to get off and on, and had to stop at every stop..

Do you remember what kind of station was down there near Balls Hill?

Just a little shed like.

Shed?

Yeh. Was a bench across the end, round the back, and across the other end. The whole front end, one side was open you know, and they had a platform out just beyond that to set the milk cans on where they could pull up and...

Deliver?

Yeh. The farmer would bring the milk and set it up on this thing. And the freight would come along, and take it on to Washington.

Oh. Some of the big dairies in Washington?

Yeh. Chestnut Farms.

How much would it cost to take that ride into Rosslyn?

From out here? The ride on the streetcar?

Yeh. Just the ride in on the Old Dominion.

Oh. I think it was about 20, 25 cents.

Do you remember what the cars looked like? Were they open?

No, they were closed, no they were all closed.

All closed in. That was really too bad they had to close that thing down. Did you ever take the trip out the other way to Great Falls?

Oh yeh.

That was supposed to be quite a vacation type, sort of.

Yeh. We kids used to go up there Fourth of July and 30th of May. Holidays, you know.

Do you remember any of the McLean Days that they had in McLean?

Oh yeh. Used to have carnivals there.

And there, what did they call them, jousting, with the little rings?

Yeh, tournaments.

Oh, one other thing about central McLean, do you remember when Franklin Sherman was built or anything else about what the central part of McLean looked like?

That Franklin Sherman School, the main part of it, I was working for Ed Gorham at the time. I put the benches, the seats, in there. We went in there and fastened them, screwed them down to the floor.

What did that building look like? It was torn down before I ever could get in to take a look at it.

Yeh. It was a nice building until they got a bunch of holes in the plaster tearing up the floor and what not. Could have been fixed up, made into a nice building.

Yeh, could have been a landmark.

Yeh.

What were the benches, all individual seats, or were they just long sort of like...?

Oh, they were individual.

Well, I guess it was all the way to high school, all in that one building?

Yeh.

It's too bad that they had to take that down. Sorry to see that go too.

Well they got plenty money! We're payin' taxes, what difference does it make? Looks a little old, tear it down and build another one, like that gas station down there in McLean.

Yeh. Putting up that new gas station. I don't understand it. Taxes just go sky high. How many acres of land do you have down here, about 5, 10 acres?

Fifteen acres.

Fifteen acres. We have two and we can hardly live on that. The taxes are... Well, let's see. I think I got just about everything here.

Interview conducted by Dana Gumb

Langley High School

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